



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 6, Issue 8

May 2016

2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Underway at USDA

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

The 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) has launched at USDA. The FEVS is administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to a random sample of permanent full and part-time employees. OPM describes the survey as a tool that measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies, including employee engagement. Many recent studies show that engaged employees are more loyal, productive, and contribute more, which leads to greater organizational performance. Through our Cultural Transformation effort, we have accomplished a great deal over the past few years when it comes to employee satisfaction and engagement. Specifically:

- Employee Advisory Councils have been developed.
- A USDA-wide Employee Engagement Action Plan was established.
- Monthly employee engagement plan progress reporting is underway.
- More than 100 employee focus groups were conducted throughout USDA.
- A number of awards and recognition programs have been held.
- The Walking in My Shoes Program has been implemented.

We have a goal to get to 70% participation in this year's survey. We set this goal because agencies that are consistently at the top of the Best Places to Work in Government list regularly achieve a participation rate of 70% or higher on the survey. If you received the survey, please complete it, and let others know that USDA is a great place to work.

Employee Engagement a USDA Priority

By Shaunda Ross and Ingrid Burford, Office of Human Resources Management

Over 50 employee engagement coordinators representing USDA's 17 agencies and mission areas stepped away from their norm on Wednesday May 11, 2016, to take part in USDA's first ever employee engagement progress update event, hosted by USDA's Virtual University. The event was designed to bring together all of the USDA engagement coordinators for the first time to share thoughts and ideas around their various engagement efforts and glean from best practices shared by their colleagues.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Malcolm Shorter provided opening remarks. Featured speakers were Dr. Karlease Kelly, USDA's Virtual University Provost, Dr. Alexis Adams, OPM's Engagement Outreach Specialist, and Arianne Gallagher, Esq., Performance Manager at OMB. They shared tools and resources to help USDA employee engagement coordinators better do their jobs. The event was well received and one attendee remarked they found it quite useful and look forward to continuing similar conversations and events that will further help their efforts in continuing to make USDA the best place to work. For additional information on USDA's Employee Engagement initiative, please contact James Brent Jr. at James.Brent@dm.usda.gov.

AMS Encourages Safe and Welcoming Workplace

By Erin Morris, Agricultural Marketing Service

On April 6, 2016, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) hosted the Agency's first Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Focus Group. This session, coordinated by AMS LGBT Special Emphasis Program Managers Nakisha Varlack and Billy Cox, and facilitated by USDA LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager Perry Stevens, provided AMS LGBT employees with the opportunity to receive a brief overview of AMS' Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results and discuss ways to foster a safe and welcoming workplace within AMS from the lens of an LGBT employee.

Participants in the focus group were pleased that USDA and AMS are expressing a commitment and due diligence toward diversity and inclusivity for all employees. Participants expressed their appreciation for being able to have a voice during the focus group. In today's ever so changing world, this was a great opportunity to engage in communication, solicit feedback, and offer recommendations that will continue to promote a welcoming workplace for all employees.

The group provided recommendations to AMS' leadership for consideration, which included opportunities for the Agency to provide education and awareness to all employees. In addition to the focus group, AMS is tentatively planning an LGBT Brown Bag event on June 15, 2016, from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., in room 2080 - South. For additional information, please contact Billy Cox or Nakisha Varlack AMSLGBTProgram@ams.usda.gov.



(Above) Participants at the AMS LGBT Listening Session included (from L-R) Nakisha Varlack, Patricia Hill, Valerie Schmale, Gregory Ramsey, Billy Cox, Jonathan Senn, Pamela Bennett, and Charmin Rickards. Fourteen AMS employees and two APHIS employees joined the discussion. (Above Right) AMS LGBT Special Emphasis Program Managers Billy Cox and Nakisha Varlack coordinated the event.

(Right) USDA "Welcoming Workplace" stickers.

(Photos by James Jeter, AMS)



Upcoming Observance at USDA

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Pride Month

Thursday, June 9, 2016

10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, DC

View recordings from many of USDA's Special Observances at

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.htm>.

Employees receive one hour of diversity training for each USDA Special Observance attended.

Agencies Partner in Kentucky for Cultural Diversity

By Amanda L. Robertson, Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency in Kentucky conducted a series of Cultural Diversity Training sessions across the Commonwealth. The training focused on Special Emphasis Programs, Employees with Disabilities, and Veterans, Hispanics, and Women in Agriculture. The trainers coordinated with Special Emphasis Managers from Natural Resource Conservation Service in preparing for these sessions. The training was presented as a part of USDA's Cultural Transformation Initiative, which focuses on creating an inclusive and high-performing organization.

"I feel confident that our employees have gained an increased respect for the diversity of the USDA workforce and feel better prepared to meet future challenges," stated John W. McCauley, State Executive Director.

Employees ended the training by participating in a competitive game of Jeopardy to test their knowledge on Cultural Diversity! The target audience included District Directors, Farm Loan Managers, Farm Loan Officers, Farm Loan Officer Trainees, County Executive Directors, County Office Reviewers, and all Program Technicians. The training was conducted by Amanda Robertson, Beginning Farmer Regional Coordinator and Tracy Bailey, a Farm Loan Officer based in Bowling Green, KY.

Finding Your Voice Through Toastmasters

By Mark Chandler, U.S. Forest Service

So you've made it to your dream job and you've impressed your boss with your writing skills, now she wants you to present it at the next staff meeting. Stage fright kicks in, cold sweats, and the meeting is in two hours. One word... [Toastmasters \(TM\)](#).



Members of USDA Toastmasters Club 3294 meet weekly to develop communication and leadership skills.

The USDA hosts the USDA Toastmasters Club 3294 every Wednesday, at noon, in the USDA-South Building. TM provides a unique and proven program for developing the communication skills and the leadership skills of your employees and managers.

Participation in TM provides regular and constructive feedback from peers as you practice organizing your thoughts and presenting them clearly. Toastmasters provides

leadership experience for ALL members through its [leadership development track](#) and club involvement. There are unlimited opportunities for personal and professional growth in your USDA career by being a member of TM.

The initial membership fee to TM is only \$45.00 for 6 months (\$90.00/year), which includes a subscription to the [Toastmaster, a monthly magazine](#) that provides insights on communication, leadership, club activities and important tips. Please contact Ms. Elaine Hite VP Membership at (202) 418-8808 or email us at USDA_Toastmasters_Execs@newsbox.usda.gov if you have additional questions.

This year is an excellent time to join TM since the Nation's Capital Region will be the host for the [2016 Toastmasters International Conference](#), August 17 -20, 2016 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C.

2016 Telework Week: The Results Are In!

By Debra Arnold, Office of Human Resources Management

'April showers bring May flowers', but April also ushers in 'Telework Week'. 'Telework Week' is held annually the first full week in April and serves multiple purposes. 'Telework Week' opens the door for Core Teleworkers to request expansion of their Telework Days, provides an opportunity for situational Teleworkers to test their ability to effectively Telework and encourages non-Teleworking, eligible employees to participate. 'Telework Week' is used as a practice for continuity of operations, provides viable data to calculate projected cost savings and evaluate the reduction of our carbon footprint.

Of the Department's 88,100 employees, 10,974 pledged to Telework during 'Telework Week'. Included in the 10,974 pledges are 1,640 employees who reported currently Teleworking full-time. Figure 1 below identifies by Mission Area the number of days pledged and the projected cost savings. Telework may be an employee 'benefit', but it is definitely a benefit to the Department and our environment. For more information on this report or to learn more about the USDA Telework Program, send emails to telework@dm.usda.gov.

Figure 1. Projected Annual Cost Savings

Mission Area/Agency	Annual Pledge Days	Commuter Miles Saved	Commuter Minutes Saved	Commuter Subsidy Saved	Gallons of Gasoline Saved	Pounds of Carbon Dioxide Saved
DM	114,100	5,013,250	9,630,700	\$479,072	139,258	835,542
NAL	2,600	156,500	345,000	\$4,600	4,347	26,083
OASA	800	32,800	92,000	\$2,850	911	5,467
OBPA	650	92,000	120,000	\$8,860	2,556	15,333
OC	2,850	132,650	366,750	\$18,275	3,685	22,108
OCE	200	3,500	3,750	\$650	97	583
OE	550	9,250	53,000	\$2,790	257	1,542
OSEC	800	26,800	91,750	\$2,280	744	4,467
OGC	4,800	145,850	396,350	\$28,600	4,051	24,308
OASCR	8,500	407,550	801,250	\$74,931	11,321	67,925
OCFO	22,100	1,146,000	1,852,700	\$89,940	31,833	191,000
OIG	12,250	473,900	1,043,750	\$44,615	13,164	78,983
NAD	2,850	99,300	202,650	\$250	2,758	16,550
FFAS	103,550	5,128,250	9,828,350	\$340,969	142,452	854,708
FNCS	33,800	1,729,700	3,824,900	\$155,683	48,047	288,283
FS (Food Safety)	31,300	1,272,400	3,772,050	\$169,815	35,344	212,067
MRP	178,150	8,761,550	17,448,500	\$562,733	243,377	1,460,258
NRE	314,750	13,637,850	24,570,350	\$534,913	378,830	2,272,975
RD	176,200	8,558,550	15,436,550	\$494,316	237,738	1,426,425
REE	95,350	4,253,250	9,124,150	\$338,675	118,146	708,875
USDA TOTAL:	1,102,200	50,888,350	98,514,750	\$3,345,147	1,413,568	8,481,390

1. The average miles per gallon (mpg) for cars in U.S. is 36 mpg for light-duty vehicle, passenger car; according to the U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT); Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology (OST-R). This number is used to calculate gallons of gasoline and pound of carbon saved.

2. All figures are in annual savings

3. The number of pledge days are actual Telework week pledges projected for a full year

Do you have an article to submit to MyUSDA? Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity or event demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items:

- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Recruitment & Retention
- ◆ Talent Management
- ◆ Employee Development
- ◆ Customer Focus & Community Outreach

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.

Sparking “Aha!” Moments at USDA

By Debra Arnold, Office of Human Resources Management

On April 28, 2016, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Headquarters hosted its annual ‘Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day’ event. This year’s theme, ‘Sparking Aha! Moments’ brought hundreds of children to the Whitten Patio to learn what USDA was all about.

The day’s event was attended by children of USDA employees and a group of students from the Raymond Education Campus, a District of Columbia Public School. All the children enjoyed learning about soil science, conservation forestry, sustainability, food nutrition and the 4-H program, and they also had some fun with Milkshake, Woodsy Owl and Rosie the Riveter. Students from the Raymond Campus ended the day with a tour lead by Ali Muhammad,



Raymond Campus Students visit with Assistant Secretary for Administration Dr. Gregory L. Parham (tan suit) and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration Malcolm Shorter (black suit) as part of Take Our Daughters & Sons To Work Day.

Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager. The tour included a visit to the office of Dr. Gregory Parham, Assistant Secretary for Administration where they were greeted and quizzed by Dr. Parham and Mr. Malcolm Shorter, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration about their interest in college and career choices. Students also met with Assistant Secretary Joe Leonard, Office of Civil Rights, Bianca Oden, Deputy Chief of Staff for Secretary Vilsack, Bobbi Jeanquart, Director, Office of Human Resources Management, and Sabrina Ferguson-Ward, Acting

Director for the Diversity, Recruitment and Work/Life Division. They reiterated the importance of a good education, challenging yourself, and following your dreams. The tour wrapped up with a visit to the USDA television and radio studio. Mansey Pullen greeted the students and explained the functions of the studios and how an education in communications could lead to a career at USDA.

Sparking Aha! Moments at this event was a ‘piece of cake,’ confirmed by the children in attendance when they were asked, “Would you like to work at USDA?” The answer was a resounding ‘YES’. For more information about this and other Work/Life and Wellness Programs, send emails to wellness@dm.usda.gov. See more pics from the event at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/26749080626/in/photostream/>.

By Shirley Samson, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Several USDA agencies observed Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day on April 28th. At the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Jay Johnson, Director of Eastern Field Operations, and Barbara Rater, Director of the Census and Survey Division (pictured with students, right) awarded the children certificates after the day-long event. The young visitors learned about the NASS mission and took part in games and exercises surrounding this year’s theme, “Sparking Aha! Moments.” The adults also had some “aha!” moments of their own with the help of the children’s thoughtful questions and remarks. We look forward to the opportunities brought by next year’s event!



USDA Employees Recognized for Adopt a School Program

By Montez Langford Ashley, U.S. Forest Service

Two years ago the U.S. Forest Service Office of Civil Rights, Eastern Region, felt it was important to support science-based instruction through the Adopt a School Program. Hawley Environmental Elementary in Milwaukee WI, a Title I Charter school with a special focus on Environmental Education serving grades K4 through 5th grade, was selected as our first partner. A key attraction to working with Hawley was the diverse demographic make-up of the student body. The primary goal of the partnership is empowering young people to serve as the next generation of land stewards who reflect the American public.



The partnership turns the agency's Cultural Transformation goals of diversity and inclusion into tangible actions. Key components of the partnership include science-based hands-on demonstrations, career awareness, faculty development, and providing support to the school in the form of donating school supplies and equipment.

A Wisconsin elementary school held a ceremony to thank U.S. Forest Service employees for donating items as part of the Adopt a School program. Pictured: Sherry Fountain, District Ranger, Walker Ranger District (left); Leslie Zylstra, Environmental Implementer, Hawley Environmental School (center); and Montez Ashley, EEO Specialist, Office of Civil Rights, Northeastern Region (right).

Earlier this fiscal year, the Walker Ranger District of the Chippewa National Forest

donated stools and picnic tables to Hawley's Outdoor Classroom. A dedication ceremony formalizing the donation of the items to the school took place in April as part of the Arbor Day Program. Wisconsin State Senator Lena Taylor served as keynote speaker. In addition, Forest Service employees conducted hands-on demonstrations in fire and range management, wildlife, and forestry.

FSA, RD, NRCS Partner for Women's History Month in VA

By Danielle Logan, Rural Development

More than 30 employees from three USDA agencies in Virginia's state office joined together to observe Women's History Month on March 31 at the Celebrating Women's Leadership speaker event. Members of Farm Service Agency, Rural Development and Natural Resources Conservation Service listened as FSA State Director, Jewel Bronaugh, Ph. D., shared insights about the future of agriculture and how women can shape it. "When we google famous leaders in agriculture we get a bunch of men," Bronaugh began, "But where are the ladies?"



Bronaugh said that in the last five years women farmers were the principal operators on 14 percent of farms and ranches, produce 60-80 percent of food in developing countries, produce more than half of all food worldwide, and account for 41 percent of the global agricultural labor force. She recognized that, unfortunately, sometimes women don't aspire to positions of power even though they are essential to the success of the business.

She urged women to not only assert themselves in a directed path, but to identify a personal brand that she says is "the thing you can do better than anyone else." Bronaugh's presentation was an uplifting reminder that no one gets to the corner office by sitting on the side of the room.

USDA Farm Service Agency Virginia State Director, Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, speaks at the Celebrating Women Leadership event.

Reduce Food Waste? Challenge Accepted!

By Emanuel (Ken) Melton, Agricultural Marketing Service

Since USDA launched the U.S. Food Waste Challenge in 2013, leaders and organizations across the food chain have committed to reducing, recovering, and recycling food loss and waste. Last week, AMS Administrator Starmer joined our newest partners in this effort at the Jessup Terminal Market to launch their own friendly competition, the Terminal Market U.S. Food Waste Challenge.



Produce markets can help reduce waste by rerouting food that would otherwise be wasted to food banks or local pantries that feed families in need.

We know that many terminal markets are already working with individual produce wholesalers to donate excess fruits and vegetables directly to various charities and food banks. Read More on the [USDA Blog](#).

Agricultural Marketing Service Administrator Elanor Starmer (left) and AMS Market News reporter, Holly Mozal (center) talk with an employee at the Jessup Terminal Market in Jessup, MD.

USDA Employees Volunteer for Arbor Day in Massachusetts

By Linda C. Hubley, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

On April 29, 2016, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service staff from the Worcester Asian Longhorned Beetle Eradication Program based in the City of Worcester, MA, in conjunction with our cooperative partnering staff from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation contributed their talent and energy to several Arbor Day projects within the City of Worcester.

Working alongside volunteers from the Greater Worcester Land Trust and Davey Resource Group the staff broke into several groups which then dug invasive Barberry from trails and fields at Donker Farms, raked and pruned the picnic area, cut out dead trees along the main trail and built a natural stone bridge over a stream all at the Greater Worcester Land Trust Cascades Park. Another project was the pruning of the Roosevelt Oak which had been planted by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1916. USDA and DCR climbers pruned out much of the dead wood and were featured in the Worcester Telegram and Gazette. <http://www.telegram.com/article/20160429/NEWS/160429046>



The staff at the Worcester Asian Longhorned Beetle Eradication Program (pictured left) have volunteered for various projects for several years within the City of Worcester. In addition to cleaning and improving local parks, they also volunteer at local elementary and middle schools.

USDA & the 2016 Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Mile Run/5K

By Tatjana Fernández, Office of Human Resources Management

It was a cold, blustery morning on Sunday, April 3rd, when sustained winds wreaked havoc throughout the DC metro area. In the meantime, over 50 determined members of the *USDA Running and Walking Club (RWC)* got up early in the morning to participate in the 2016 *Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run/5K*.



The levels of running experience in this group varied. For some, it was the first time ever completing a 5k, but for others, it was another exciting race they were adding to the mix of their own running records. RWC members gathered in front of the Jamie L. Whitten building to smile for a group photo (left) before lining up for the races, immortalizing a morning where wind gusts of over 20 mph kept temperature in the mid-20s.

Several agencies/offices were represented: Departmental Management, Foreign Agricultural Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, Office of Inspector General, Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Office of the General Counsel, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Risk Management Agency, Rural Development, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Food and Nutrition Service, and Economic Research Service.

The RWC thanks the Agriculture Federal Credit Union (AFCU) wholeheartedly for their support in sponsoring the participation of RWC members for the 2016 *Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run/5K*.

The USDA Running and Walking Club holds monthly meetings, training activities, and other events that are conducive to a healthy lifestyle. If you want to receive additional information about the RWC and its events, please contact RWC President Dora Flores at Dora.Flores@ams.usda.gov.

You may also visit the RWC's USDA Connect page (e-Auth/LincPass required) at <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/usdarunningandwalkingclub>.



OPEDA Accepting Scholarship Applications Through June 30

By Dana Manning, Departmental Management



Organization of Professional Employees of the USDA (OPEDA) members in good standing and their family members (broadly defined) attending college are eligible to apply for scholarships for the 2016-2017 school year.

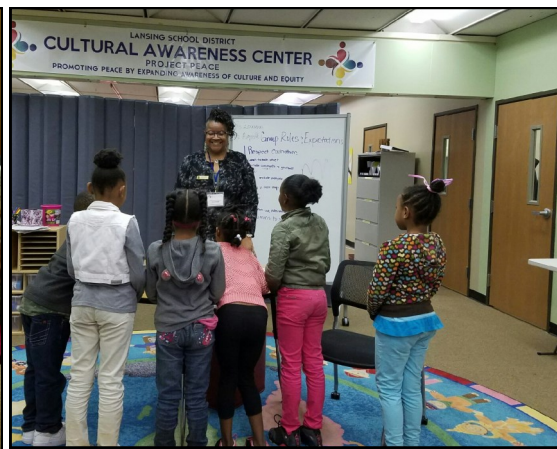
This year, OPEDA will be awarding two scholarships of \$1,500 each. The two scholarships awarded are in honor of John W. Peterson and Steven "Tom" Stefani for their exemplary service to OPEDA, the USDA, and our country.

We encourage you to visit OPEDA's website for more information about membership and scholarship opportunities.
http://opeda.org/Scholarship_OPEDA.html.

U.S. Forest Service Reaching Out to Michigan Students

By Diane G. Gardin, U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service is working with young students in Lansing, MI, to help them learn conflict resolution (due to bullying) and how to focus on Listening, Understanding, Respect, and Explaining (LURE). The Forest Service's Federal Women's Program Manager, Diane G. Gardin, and Restorative Practices Program Manager Brandy A. Jones partnered on the four week project at Gardner Leadership, Law & Government K-8 Academy. They worked with a select group of 1st graders who had challenges interacting with peers and teachers. The sessions went from April 19 to May 10. On the last day, the students received goody bags from the Forest Service.



(Left) First grade students at the Gardner Leadership, Law, and Government K-8 Academy in Lansing, MI, hold up their U.S. Forest Service goody bags.

(Right) Forest Service Women's Program Manager Diane G. Gardin with students from the Academy.

You can contact MyUSDA by emailing MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



Catch Up On Recent Issues of MyUSDA!

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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The monthly deadline for submissions is the end of the first week of each month.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the event. The ideal word count for articles is 150-200. All submissions are subject to editing and Departmental review.

Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity, event, or observance demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.